

[PRICE THREE-PENCE.]

AN

IMPARTIAL ADDRESS

TO

ALL PARTIES.

BY A WELL-WISHER TO THE CONSTITUTION.

A. L.

“Some say I am of Cephas and some of Paul; but I am of none of you.”

L O N D O N :

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1795.



AN

IMPARTIAL ADDRESS, &c.

AT a time when the passions of mankind are inflamed by the sinister practices of selfish and designing men, it is more than prudent, it is unavoidably necessary that some one should step forward to effect a more moderate method of proceeding, and to calm, rather than irritate the perturbed minds of misguided politicians.

There are a sufficient number of writers ever ready to argue on every side in defence of party, and by heightening the odium which dissention has already cast upon their opponents, stimulate their disciples to excesses, which however near they may imagine they may lead them to the wished for end, will finally leave them bewildered in the mist raised by prejudice, augmented by passion, and sustained by mere motives of opposition and interest.

Were my arguments found as strong, my reasons as decisive, and my pen as eloquent as my heart is warm in the cause of universal benevolence, I should neither fear or fail to convince. But the subject is new to me; the task of writing for the public difficult. I am unused to argue, and have only to pre-

sent in the language of nature, not the diction of art, the wishes of a heart which only beats to general philanthropy—Inspired with the genuine sentiments of Christianity, I would preach peace upon earth and good-will towards men.

To Aristocrats, to Democrats (would there were no such distinctions), to all parties do I address myself: May they reflect on the motives of my writing, not the manner in which I write,—may they consider the end rather than the action. To gain peace, not fame, is my desire; and to avoid disgrace for an essay which it is not impossible may meet contempt, is my hope, and therefore I remain anonymous. Through the few paths of life in which I have wandered, I have not passed on with an unobserving eye: I have seen that conciliation is seldom the work of advice; it is rather the effect of a man's own consideration, and the offspring of time; I have therefore the less reason to hope to effect my purpose; but if amongst the many I convert one erring mind my work is happy, and my labour not unrewarded.

My own principles are derived from a sincere and firm attachment to my country and its constitution; again I declare peace is the wish of my soul, and to unite discordant parties my sole endeavour. The design of this little pamphlet is not to make wider a breach already unhappily too wide. I would rather by giving the sentiments of all parties a fair discussion and a just representation, take the odium from the one, which has been unjustly cast upon it, and add by reasoning to the meekness of the other. I would teach them to approximate, and finally unite to the strengthening of themselves, and the subversion of our enemies, and the overthrow of such as may *really* aim at the ruin of a country and the destruction of a constitution, they are bound to preserve and admire by every tie of gratitude, of reason, and of interest.

To

To a mind of even common sensibility infinite must be the pain on reviewing the scenes around us. Not only kingdom divided against kingdom, but if we descend through the chain of circumstances and of situations, we shall too frequently find *family* against *family*, and even *father* against *son*. Such violent extremes must be ever found inimical to national welfare. An elegant writer* has observed, and justly, that truth never lies in the extremes.

But that there should be only extremes at present appears the public determination. Mediocrity seems contemned, whilst interest investigates the one, and opposition the other.

That there is, however, a set men who prefer this contemptible mediocrity, is a point not difficult to be proved; and it is in favour of these men, I have begun to petition.

Be the contempt they are held in ever so great, they are the only beings to whom we can look forward for help and counsel in the present critical state of our political concerns. They are the only men who can, amidst the storm of contending parties look on unmoved, deliberate, and be just. Yet strange as it may appear, these are marked out for all the bitterness of rage, by blind zealots of every description. With them, however, I must sympathize in sorrow at the idea, that when every one should unite to save their country, the greatest dissention prevails, and will prevail, whilst this paralysis of political perception, thus clouds our understanding. Ambition, like the torrent which has burst its bounds, bears every thing before it. In its rapid overflow it sweeps away with it virtue, merit, and honest integrity. Nothing seems to stand its rage, but that which urged it on, and tri-

* Mr. Berrington.

umphs through the whole—the most unbounded and criminal self-interest. The most head-long, are however, the most blind—impetuosity raises a dust which obscures its passion.

Those who would make their own seats permanent by overthrowing their brethren, are too much hurried on by some few considerations to attend to such leading circumstances and trifling incidents, as would, were they attended to, be most likely to produce the end they aim at. The mightiest mass is composed of the smallest atoms; every one of which are of equal value, and worthy of equal consideration. Indolence is the mark of an imperfect mind; wariness will in time help to constitute a great one. That we may in a great measure attribute to the head-long ambition of Ministers, the present disasters of the nation is, I fear, but too certain. The parties concerned, I mean the agents of our state of affairs, may argue from their motives and different views; by-standers and sufferers must reason from facts and feelings.

The nation is at present miserably divided and disturbed by two parties, commonly denominated Aristocrats and Democrats. That those who have *ranged* themselves under the standard of the first, appears to be the most numerous party, I believe no one on a serious consideration will attempt to deny; zealots of the opposite description, will, indeed, assert the contrary; but when we come to distinguish those who are, from those who are only denominated democrats, they will considerably diminish in their numbers, and be reduced to a standard much below any thing that has hitherto been imagined, and a similar subtraction might in some degree be made from those who are called Aristocrats. It is then to these who are actually of the above mentioned parties, that I would address myself in
favour

favour of those, whom I have separated from either, and wish to represent to the world, such as they really are—the best of citizens—Shall I add another title?—I will—the *best of men*!

A candid investigation of their sentiments and of their principles would probably, nay, it ought undoubtedly to place them in this light. Friends of reason—friends of humanity! let the violence of party prejudices for one moment subside, and grant me your attention!

The British constitution is in its own nature such as to admit of no such distinctions as those of Aristocrats and Democrats. Neither of these parties can consistently with its principles legally exist; for whilst the Aristocratic encroaches on the liberty of the people, so the other would lessen the allegiance of the subject, and overturn the royal authority. We have lately been very much alarmed by the cries of the former, who have declared the constitution cannot long subsist in consequence of the daring attempts of the Democrats. And we are told (though I must own it is by the same party), that the Democrats on the other hand are determined no longer to bear the despotism of the Aristocratic faction; that they are determined to subvert the whole order of government and turn out King, Lords and Commons. Whether there are any solid grounds for such reports is not my business to enquire; I wish attention on other subjects.

There are faults on both sides; for whilst the one talks of despotism, the other retorts with charges of treason. Let them both be weighed in the balance of reason, and they will both be found wanting. But if any degree of preponderancy can belong to either, it ought to belong to Democrats. Once indeed it did—the list of nobility was once far short of the present catalogue. The *people* had the influence

fluence by the creation of new titles, &c. and the power of the monied men and the great has been increased, while that of the general body of the people has been diminished by the restraining of votes to estates of forty shillings a year; and of representation to six hundred pounds; as no person not having the first can vote, and no person not possessing the second can be elected, at least for counties—and our borough representation is still more partial.

Our government is styled a *limited Monarchy*, and such it surely was when the glorious Alfred felt and proved himself the father, the friend of his people. Then was the nation happy in its monarch, and then was the monarch happy in the nation!!! But even adding all the new acts which have taken place in favour of the crown and privileges of the nobles, it is even still a *limited Monarchy*. Britons! we are told it is our duty to preserve our constitution; be careful then that the term *absolute* is not substituted for that of *limited*! If we have not courage and resolution sufficient to recall the past, let us at least guard the future. Encroachments have been made, we are therefore liable to more. We cannot say but that in time forty shillings may not qualify a man to vote.

But, even in the present bad state of affairs, this Monarchy is so far *limited*, that the people, when their liberties are not invaded, and their rights preserved as far as the Constitution preserves them, have still a great share in the legislation. The Monarch is bound by his oath to observe the laws which have been formerly enacted by the representatives of the people. If he neglects his duty, the people have a right to represent to him that he has done so, and to declare their grievances. If he then

then neglects to consider that he is bound to be the guardian, and not the aggressor of the laws, he renders the allegiance of his subjects not only unnecessary, but also justifies their conduct by his own, should they then, tired of a vain remonstrance, proceed to greater lengths, and attempt to gain by force what was denied to persuasion. That those would be called Democrats, who acted according to this their indefeasible right, I have no doubt; indeed we have many recent instances where only wishing to do so has drawn down the name. But that the subject has such a right, was proved at the Revolution—and the acts of those days have become glorious precedents for the future necessity. It is also clear that the laws which were made to protect the people, were accompanied by others equally defensive to the King. No offence *properly* so called, can be committed by the one, which cannot be remedied and redressed by the other.

If then the executive power is so well guarded, let it look to itself and consider the *just* consequences arising from a conduct which will be proved as impolitic and unnecessary, as it will be cruel and unjust.

Notwithstanding the above truths, the times are become so arbitrary that those who wish to maintain their rights, are denominated of that class of men of which the public have been taught to be so jealous.

We find even amongst the representatives of the people, the majority with those who use this appellation. If this is a hardship the people may look home for its origin—but they must never expect it to be otherwise in a septennial Parliament; a Parliament which far from giving the collected voice of the nation, can give but a part of it—and even that part can only be given by a set of men, chosen by
a few

a few, to whom the privilege of choosing has been given by those they elected. Was it the voice of the people that confined the vote to forty shillings?—or was it the voice of those who, possessing lands, could parcel them out into small quantities, and annexing a vote to such quantities, sell them to secure a sufficient number of petty adherents against the next election?

Thus interest, not opinion, gives many a vote!—How many boroughs are entirely influenced by the nobility? How many members elected for causes the most shameful to reason? How many constituents sell their votes to a member in whom they can discover neither probity, sense, or any other qualification requisite to render him the representative of thousands of his countrymen? And how many, taking the appearance of qualifications necessary for such a sacred charge, entirely deceive those who are to elect them?—Once having obtained a seat, they remove the mask, and appear in all their native deformity. It is of small consequence then, what the people think; *seven years* is a long time to exercise their power, and at the end of that time something new may happen to give them the seat again.

If such as have given their votes to men of the above characters, complain of grievances, they must consider themselves as the source of all they suffer.—But where must the poorer and most injured part of the nation turn to?—*They* feel the evils of a corrupt administration most; *they* feel the taxes *heaviest*, but *they* have *least* to defray them with—but *they* were not consulted! If we were to talk of some new discovered nation, where the candidates for a place in the National Senate, were said to carry their election by killing, by drinking, &c. &c. we should exclaim,
 “ It

ERRATA.

- Page 5 Line 14. For a set Men, *read* a set of Men
- ib. 12. For instigate, *read* investigate.
- 6 4. For passion, *read* passage.
- 8 1. A *full stop* after influence, and *but* before by,—after &c.
take out *and*.
- 10 last line. For killing, *read* kissing.
- 13 14. The *v* is left out of *having*.
- 15 11 *from the bottom*, For merits, *read* mist.
- 17 9 *from the bottom*. Put *to* after *steer*. For 1668 *read* 1688.
- 18 After *aristocracy* put *which*. Take out one of the *my's* in
the next sentence, before *country*.



“ It is the fable of a traveller, or the dream of a person writing histories from his fireside.”

Are no such things done in Britain? How many men are elected because one says he is a jolly dog, and can drink down all his constituents; another because he has excellent venison, and can liberally bestow it a short time previous to an election; another because the *ladies* think him a *pleasant man*—or has kissed all the dirty girls he met with.

These are undoubtedly great constitutional advantages! Not to mention more selfish or sordid causes of success, how many are unquestionably elected for the above? Yet this is termed the *voice of the people*! Britons, if ye will suffer this—ye must reproach none but yourselves for the evils ye suffer---Are these not noble qualifications for the men in whose hands your happiness, your property, your lives, are invested? For on a war, a peace, on taxes, or on freedom, these all depend—And as they have power to cause the last, so they have consequence to influence the former. And what is the conduct of these men so elected? Can we discover any affection for the people, any regard to their interests? Let us regard them a little longer---But I fear at present “ the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint.”

As was before hinted, under false colors, and with sinister designs, with fair promises and flattering shews of patriotic virtues, do many of the candidates present themselves to the people. Out of the *few* candidates whose *circumstances* enable them to offer, some one must be chosen. Indeed the nature of some boroughs are such, as to oblige the electors to choose any that offers, whether they are approved or not. But where there are left a few to be consulted, and where there are a few who will think for themselves, it is necessary the candidate should

should wear the semblance of virtue; the hypocrisy of a year or two will be amply compensated by the holiday of seven. It would not be worth their trouble to assume the appearance of integrity for a seat of only a year; and were our sessions again limited to such a period, the candidates would be taught, that on their *own intrinsic merits only* their re-election would depend.

After the gaining of their wishes how do the characters of many entirely change!—To secure a party; to flatter the great, to gain consequence and obtain a place, will lead many to vote with the Minister, and support a motion, which had conscience or national benefit been called into the question, would have made them use every effort to overthrow. How many rise unequal to the subject they are about to speak on—blind through actual or affected ignorance, to the good of mankind and to the necessities of the kingdom; unfeeling and uncandid, they will, perhaps, with one monosyllable ruin thousands! For an injudicious yea or nay adds strength and impels ruin.

A blood-thirsty Minister, an avaricious Statesman possessing interest with the Monarch, can in consequence of that interest carry weight with the member, who careless of every suggestion but that of interest or ambition, adopts the measure, cleaves to the party, and becomes regardless of the sacred trust confided in him. It is seven years before he can meet the reward he merits, and at the end of that time his own interest may have become so great, as to secure him a sufficient number of constituents as uncivic as himself.

It might not be amiss, if such as were inclined to support a motion in Parliament, were, before they gave their assent, seriously to weigh not only the merits of the motion, but also narrowly to investigate

gate the private and public character of the original mover. Character, say many, has nothing to do with Parliamentary acts—but there is a possibility of their being wrong in this regard. From a man's peculiar situation, private circumstances, local concerns, connexions, views, interests, &c. he may be led to propose an amendment, or bring a motion, which to a superficial observer, or an inattentive partizan, may seem to arise from the most laudable motives, and constitutional views—but if scrutinized with an eye of fixed attention and determined rectitude, may perhaps be discovered to spring from sources the most self-interested, and founded on designs solely tending to personal advantage. Having thus regarded the business, it may take an entire new appearance, and stand forth displayed in new colors and new light.

The too readily assenting to and adopting of, with steady adherence, the measures of a Minister, the acquiescent compliance with his opinions, and blindness to his views, will too often lead to the oppression of the most loyal subjects, and disinterested men.

Does it not frequently, at the present hour, involve millions in the profoundest misery? Whether the rights of the people have been infringed or not, I leave to public opinion. To say *they were* would be to *become* a Democrat—for none now dare dissent from ministerial views, without gaining a name in four instances out of five, misapplied, and generally misunderstood! To think for ourselves is to be democratic—Under this term are now brought the first men in this and the surrounding kingdoms. If a man is a philosopher he must be a Democrat—---if he unites probity with intelligence, he must still be a Democrat. Is he the guardian of the poor, is he the awe of the avaricious—
for

for justice on the Bench, or for eloquence at the Bar---does he practice in private, what he preaches in public---does he add energy of persuasion to morality of conduct---does he hold up the mirror of truth or show the light of science---does he add to our stores of knowledge in the arts---does he strike out new roads and clean the old ones---in short, is he great in law, physick, divinity, morality, or reason, he must be a Democrat. To think, to reason for ourselves, does now constitute us Democrats!—Britons, it is become disloyal to think, and to reason is disaffection.

The spirit of the present times is degradatory to human nature---it would deprive us of the chief privilege of humanity; it would deprive us of reflection. All exertion of mental faculties must be laid aside; we must give it up for dull assent and groveling inanity. The grand and distinguishing characteristic of the human species is the power of reflection. Reason was given us to weigh the different objects, both real and imaginary, which present themselves to the eye and to the mind. A man is only rational in proportion as he thinks, and the person who will not exert this glorious privilege, and think for himself, takes every thing for granted which is presented for his belief, by the crafty and designing, by the pedant and pretender. Reason was given us to increase; it is our duty to warm the noble spark into a flame---we must not hide this talent in a napkin, for what is given us is given for improvement, and the supreme intelligence will expect we should return him our gift, brightened and made fourfold.

It were of small use for Nature to have endowed us with this sublime faculty, and to have so widely separated us from the brute creation, if we are determined, or if our rulers are determined for us,
that

that we shall debase ourselves, and by our grovelling and inactive inclinations, show a propensity for nothing but to return to the dust from whence we came. He who encourages an indolent mind, becomes in fact a second Nebuchadnezzar---he eats, drinks, and sleeps by mechanism, or by instinct, merely as the brutes---he speaks as a bird of tuition, or walks erect as an ape or monkey---every act of his existence shows his relationship to brutality, and though he does not every thing a brute does, he does nothing a brute does not do. If man thus delights in degradation, it is fit he should meet his reward, and gather the indispensable fruits thereof---for as like an ass he will bear, so like an ass may he be burdened. Sorry am I to say our species is thus humiliated, and that there are those who will not only submit with this tame and mean submission to impositions themselves, but will suffer them to be made on such who have neither sense or power to maintain their own liberty---and who groan beneath the burden, without strength either to bear or to remove it---yes, they will suffer "the ox to be muzzled that treadeth out the corn."

Humanity! Patriotism! Fraternity! all call on us to save our country, and to remove the merits of ignorance, and teach the people to redress their wrongs---let us not desert those few disinterested beings, who, having essayed to do so, are become obnoxious to the great. Let us teach the ignorant, that he is not conscious of the dignity of his own nature, until having thrown off the chains of error, of bigotry, and of superstition; of inglorious slavery, and of usurped power, he can suffer his thoughts to roam around through myriads of scenes, and can teach his mind to reason upon all he sees---
let

let reason be his Deity, his sovereign, and his friend.

The great founder of our Constitution, when he declared "every Briton should be as free as his own thoughts," must have supposed it the privilege of every Briton to enjoy an unbounded freedom of thought—yet this freedom the Aristocratic Faction of the present day deem a presumption. If the philanthropic and seasonable calls of the friends of humanity happen to make, from the slavish herd of lethargic beings, one man venture to rouse himself and exert his unbounded freedom, he is immediately branded with those titles, which were *once* as replete with disgrace, as those are *now contemptible*, who dare to give them; I say *once*, because circumstance makes every thing: To disobey or murmur at a just and proper order may be called rebellious in the truest sense; but if for shaking off the chains of undue subjection; if exerting ourselves in opposition to tyranny, and teaching our fellow creatures to be free and happy, is called rebellious;—Welcome the term, it is an honourable title!!!—If we act otherwise, we shall properly class ourselves with that species of animal with which a certain *Penfioner* has ranked us:

" Aye, in the catalogue you go for men,
 " As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,
 " Shoughs, water-rugs and demy-wolves, are 'clepd
 " All by the name of dogs; the valued file
 " Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle;
 " The housekeeper, the hunter; every one
 " According to the gift, which bounteous nature
 " Hath in him clos'd; and so of men
 " Now if you have a station in the file
 " And not the worst rank of manhood—say it.

Macbeth.

Say,

Say, Britons, then, are great men better, and are poor men worse than in the days of Alfred? Has the Deity who once made all mankind equal, and who did not *then* confine the power of reasoning, the privilege of thought, to rank or greatness, now altered the universal system of nature? Are those men who will assert their rights, and maintain their native dignity, to act for you, to be the only men who are to suffer for so doing—Shall they suffer at all? Shall, those, who because they suffer not themselves, and are therefore become callous to your miseries; who set under their own vine and fig-tree and under *your's* too; longer monopolize the blessings of the earth? Will you forfeit your title to the name of man by becoming brutes? for only brutes should suffer their fellows to be injured? How many are suffering poverty, contempt, hunger, sorrow, exile and confinement, for the *dreadful crime* of thinking!!!

How many oppressed by falsehood have been confined and ruined? Men to whom the utmost efforts of their malignant enemies could attach no guilt—ruined! Men, whose sole motives for meeting in what has been termed *sedition assemblies*, were to direct us to an end, that even the pilot at the helm of Government once made us think, even *he* wished to steer, though, perhaps, he has *forgot it now!* They met to petition. In the constitution framed in 1668, it was decreed: “ That it is the right of “ the subject to petition the King, and all commitments or prosecutions for such petitioning are “ illegal.” *See the Bill of Rights.*

Have men been prosecuted for petitioning? They have been more; they have been confined for only exciting the people to petition!

“ I think

" I think our country sinks beneath the yoke ;
 " It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash
 " Is added to her wounds."

Macbeth.

Britons, are ye men? Can you thus tamely behold the only men who dared essay to save you and assert your rights, suffering for their philanthropy.

What, now, is England; to what is she reduced in consequence of this ministerial *hobby-horse*, this dreadful war—is she on the brink of ruin? Had there been a majority in the House to vote against it, we might yet have flourished; but also to vote against the war, was to be democratic in ministerial dialect. But here again we must date our evils from the nature of our Parliament. How could we expect a majority for the people, when the power of electing representatives is confined to so few; when those elected can be so much influenced by the Aristocracy is more than sufficient to balance the Commons; but we must cease to complain—we *deserve* if we *permit*.

Oh! Britain, oh! my my country! thy best defenders, thy best patriots are bowed down by——

" What boots it that in every clime
 " Through the wide spreading waste of time,
 " Thy martial glory crown'd with praise,
 " Still shone with undiminish'd blaze;
 " Thy tow'ring spirit now is broke,
 " Thy neck is bended to the yoke;
 " What foreign arms could never quell,
 " By civil rage and rancour fell,—
 " Whilst the warm blood bedews my veins
 " And unimpair'd remembrance reigns,
 " Resentment of my country's fate
 " Within my filial breast shall beat;

" And .

- " And, spite of her *insulting* foe,
- " My sympathizing verse *shall* flow.
- " Mourn, hapless Britain mourn,
- " Thy banish'd peace, thy laurels torn.

Countrymen, one word more.—Though the Minister has stained your territories with blood, let not your own inaction stain your annals with ingratitude. Friendship merits a return—seek then how to return it !

Adieu !

FINIS.

